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Salvadoran Junta Moves to Prevent Military Countercoup

The ruling six-man junta which replaced the Lemus regime in El Salvador last month has ordered several high-ranking military plotters, including former chief of staff Cordova, to leave the country, according to various reports received on 17 November by the US Embassy in San Salvador.

Apparently the officers had been working with Colonel Anibal Portillo, the present chief of staff, who reportedly has a strong following among a group of junior officers. Portillo's group is alarmed over the failure of ex-President Osorio, who was behind the coup ousting Lemus, to restrict the growing influence of Communists and partisans of Fidel Castro in the new provisional government. The three military members of the junta reportedly were holding officers' meetings at several regimental headquarters on 15 November in an attempt to rally military support. The junta members said the provisional regime included some leftists but no Communists and tried to persuade the officers that the junta is not taking orders from Osorio.

As a result of the expulsion orders, Portillo, plotters may attempt to oust the junta before their preparations are completed. The thwarting of such an attempt might give pro-Communist and pro-Castro elements enough time to complete their efforts to take over the Salvadoran Government. The secretary general of the Salvadoran Communist party is reported recently to have asked the Costa Rican party, which is considered to be a more effective Communist group, for early assistance in organizing a Communist coup. [REDACTED]

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